WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for use in a computer system for responding to received electronic messages, the method comprising:

upon receipt of an incoming electronic message in a computer system, accessing meta information stored in the computer system that identifies a first pre-selected class of a plurality of classes of stored fact information;

retrieving a portion of the stored fact information that is a member of the first pre-selected class; and

storing the retrieved portion of the stored fact information in an electronic file that is associated with the incoming electronic message such that a rule for processing the incoming electronic message can be applied to the retrieved portion.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the portion of the stored fact information is retrieved when there is a need to apply the rule.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the computer system includes a workflow for processing the incoming electronic message and wherein the method further comprises providing the electronic file with a lifetime bound to the workflow.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic file is an XML document and the retrieved portion is stored in the XML document using an XSL transaction.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the meta information includes the rule and a fact attribute identified by the rule, the fact attribute identifying the first pre-selected class of stored fact information, and wherein accessing the meta information comprises accessing the rule and the fact attribute.

6.   The method of claim 5, further comprising performing an initial screening of the incoming electronic message before accessing the meta information, wherein a result of the initial screening is used to select the rule from a plurality of rules.

7.   The method of claim 5, wherein the meta information further includes an identifier specifying where the retrieved portion of stored fact information is to be stored in the electronic file, and wherein the identifier is used in storing the retrieved portion.

8.   The method of claim 7, further comprising using the identifier to access the retrieved portion of stored fact information in the electronic file to apply the rule to the retrieved portion.

9.   The method of claim 7, wherein the identifier is an XPath query.

10.   The method of claim 1, wherein the retrieved portion of the stored fact information pertains to at least one category selected from the group consisting of: a business context of the incoming electronic message, analytical data relating to the incoming electronic message, availability of a person for attending to the incoming electronic message, a skill of a person for attending to the incoming electronic message, communication information relating to the incoming electronic message, an industry with which the incoming electronic message is associated, and combinations thereof.

11.   A computer program product containing executable instructions that when executed cause a processor to perform operations comprising:
        upon receipt of an incoming electronic message in a computer system, access meta information stored in the computer system that identifies a first pre-selected class of a plurality of classes of stored fact information;
        retrieve a portion of the stored fact information that is a member of the first pre-selected class; and
        store the retrieved portion of the stored fact information in an electronic file that is associated with the incoming electronic message such that a rule for processing the incoming electronic message can be applied to the retrieved portion.

12.   The computer program product of claim 11, wherein the portion of the stored fact information is retrieved when there is a need to apply the rule.

13.   The computer program product of claim 11, wherein the computer system includes a workflow for processing the incoming electronic message, and wherein the operations further comprise:

provide the electronic file with a lifetime bound to the workflow.

14.   The computer program product of claim 11, wherein the meta information includes the rule and a fact attribute identified by the rule, the fact attribute identifying the first pre-selected class of stored fact information, and wherein accessing the meta information comprises accessing the rule and the fact attribute, the operations further comprising:

perform an initial screening of the incoming electronic message before accessing the meta information; and

use a result of the initial screening to select the rule from a plurality of rules.

15.   A computer system comprising:
an electronic messaging system in which an incoming electronic message is received;
a first repository with stored fact information;
a second repository with meta information that identifies a first pre-selected class of a plurality of classes of the stored fact information; and
a program product including executable instructions that when executed cause the computer system, upon receipt of the incoming electronic message, 1) to access the meta information in the second repository, 2) to use the meta information to retrieve a portion of the stored fact information from the first repository, the retrieved portion being a member of the first pre-selected class, and 3) to store the retrieved portion in an electronic file that is associated with the incoming electronic message such that a rule for processing the incoming electronic message can be applied to the retrieved portion.

16.   The computer system of claim 15, wherein the executable instructions further cause the computer system to retrieve the portion of the stored fact information when there is a need to apply the rule.

17.   The computer system of claim 15, further comprising a workflow for processing the incoming electronic message, wherein the electronic file has a lifetime bound to the workflow.

18.   The computer system of claim 15, wherein the electronic file is an XML document and the retrieved portion is stored in the XML document using an XSL transaction.

19.   The computer system of claim 15, wherein the meta information includes the rule and a fact attribute identified by the rule, the fact attribute identifying the first pre-selected class of stored fact information, and wherein the executable instructions cause the computer system, in accessing the meta information, to access the rule and the fact attribute.

20.   The computer system of claim 19, wherein the meta information further includes an identifier specifying where the retrieved portion of stored fact information is to be stored in the electronic file, and wherein the executable instructions cause the computer system to use the identifier in storing the retrieved portion.

21.   The computer system of claim 20, wherein the executable instructions cause the computer system to use the identifier in accessing the retrieved portion of stored fact information to apply the rule to the retrieved portion.

22.   The computer system of claim 20, wherein the identifier is an XPath query.

23.   A method of configuring a computer system for responding to received electronic messages, the method comprising:

receiving an input in a computer system, the input identifying a first user-selected class of a plurality of classes of stored fact information to be retrieved upon receipt in the computer system of at least one incoming electronic message; and

storing, in a repository that is accessed upon receipt of the incoming electronic message, meta information that identifies the first user-selected class such that a portion of the stored fact information that is a member of the first user-selected class can be retrieved upon accessing the meta information.

24.   A computer program product containing executable instructions that when executed cause a processor to perform operations comprising:

receive an input in a computer system, the input identifying a first user-selected class of a plurality of classes of stored fact information to be retrieved upon receipt in the computer system of at least one incoming electronic message; and

store, in a repository that is accessed upon receipt of the incoming electronic message, meta information that identifies the first user-selected class such that a portion of the stored fact information that is a member of the first user-selected class can be retrieved upon accessing the meta information.